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ABSTRACT

An evaluation model is presented for the assessment and instruction of preschool children in innovative programs. A five-step procedure is outlined for preparation of the model: (1) identifying the population, (2) pre-assessment evaluation of the three learner groups (students, teachers and parents), (3) identifying instructional program objectives for the three groups, (4) formative evaluation, and (5) summative evaluation. Population identification covers students (4-year-olds), parents and teachers. For pre-assessment, diagnostic evaluation instruments used for children were the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities, the Beery Test on Visual-Motor Integration and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. Teacher pre-assessment measured educational background and instructional skill development. For parents, instruments were designed to assess parent-child interaction and also to obtain information on children's home activities. Program objectives, based on results of the pre-assessment evaluation, relate to cognitive and affective domains for each of the three groups. Formative evaluation is used to determine the degree of mastery of the learning tasks and to pinpoint the part of the task not mastered. The final component is summative evaluation, to determine the degree of behavioral change in each group of learners and thus measure the effectiveness of the total program. (Author/BF)

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A MODEL FOR EVALUATING

INNOVATIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

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PS 003968

The educational community is presently being forced to examine its commitment to young children, including preschool boys and girls. Many educators have designed programs for these preschool children. At the same time, there is strong resistance to change, possibly because of a fear that the introduced innovations may not be effective or, worse, that some of the achievements of traditional education may even suffer. These innovations must be empirically tested, but one must remember that before they can be researched, these innovations must be created by a leader in education. This paper is the result of a need in the development of an effective evaluation model for the assessment and instruction of young children. It emphasizes instruction and evaluation of both the cognitive and the affective domain of the child's development.

The steps involved in preparing the present model are as follows:

1. Identify the population.
2. Pre-assessment evaluation of the three learner groups.
3. Identifying objectives for the instructional program for the three groups of learners (students, teachers, parents).
4. Formative evaluation.
5. Summative evaluation.

The first step is the identification of the population. It would include the four-year-old boys and girls, their parents, and the teachers who will be working with both the children and their parents.

The second step is the pre-assessment or diagnostic evaluation. Prior to beginning instruction, diagnosis was used to determine what judged what skills the three groups of learners possessed.

Pre-assessment of students was undertaken at the beginng of the program to provide baseline data concerning the children's level of development in the cognitive and affective domains. In this way, the original design for an instructional program should incorporate the results of the pre-assessment evaluation, and 1) determine in what specific and general areas of development the students had strength or were lagging, and 2) provide instruction and learning guidelines for further developing these areas.

The instruments used in the pre-assessment evaluation were 1) the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic (ITPA), 2) the Beery Test on Visual-Motor Integration (VMI), and 3) The Peabody Picuture Vocabulary Test (PPVT)

The Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities is a test of specific cognitive abilities, and is used to delineate areas of difficulty in communication processes. It can also be used as a base for the development of instructional programs for children and since the major thrust of this instructional program for four-year old children is designed to involve verbal communication and the understanding of verbal instruction, this assessment tool provides a meaningful measure.

The Beery Test Visual-Motor Integration is useful as a measure of the degree to which visual perception and motor behavior are integrated in young children. The teaching of pre-academic skills is also intrinsically involved in the instructional program of four-year-olds. This technique gives an indication of the children's readiness for future writing, drawing, and reading tasks.

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test can be used as an intelligence test, but it is used here mainly as a measure of vocabulary development. Since an essential aspect of this program is to develop increased vocabularies in children, this instrument provides a meaningful measurement of previously acquired vocabulary development. These three instruments were employed to provide specific and general areas of weaknesses and strengths in this group of children.

The pre-assessment of teachers involved a measurement of their educational backgrounds, skill development in instructional techniques, and assessment of development of young children. This evaluation was made through an examination of the teachers previous collegiate course content, their current interests and activities, classroom observation, and through a session in which teachers stated their personal strengths and deficiencies.

The parents were given two instruments which were designed to assess the amount of involvement between parents and children, and also to obtain information about the child's activities at home. In assessing the parent-child interaction, some of the areas in

which data was collected are: playing games together, talking with one's child, watching T.V. together, reading to the child, shopping with the child, going to the library together, buying a new book for the child, and complimenting the child. Parents were asked to give several examples of types of interaction. An example of this is after the following question: In the past month, how many times did you take your child to a library? The the parents were asked: What did you and your child talk about? This gives additional information as to the type of parent-child interaction.

The instrument designed to collect data about the child's activities at home include the following areas: amount of time spent watching television, watching children's television programs, listening to records, listening to children's records, playing alone, ability to play with other children without conflict, following instruction, ability to dress himself, and ability to count and say the alphabet. Data was also collected as to the child's involvement in watching children's television programs. This was done by the parents reporting as whether the child responded when asked to sing, count, etc. on the program, or if he played with toys while viewing, or if he often left the room while the program was in progress. These two instruments are used to collect self-reporting data from parents. In addition to collecting data, these instruments are instructional for parents.

The third step is stating the objectives which are based on the results of the pre-assessment evaluation of the three groups of learners. Good instruction and learning activities are based upon the assessment of the skills possessed by the three groups of learners. This enables the instructors to know what behavior the learner should be able to perform as a result of instruction and also permit valid post-assessment of whether or not the learners have acquired the desired behaviors. Instructional planning and the assessment of learner performance are closely interrelated.

The objectives of the program for these four-year-old children are:

The Cognitive Domain

a. To increase the child's vocabulary so that he can

identify concepts concerning space, quantity, time, etc.

b. To increase the child's listening ability so that he can correctly identify sounds.

c. To enable a child to describe verbally the images he preceives.

d. To enable a child to experience images from words.

The Affective Domain

a. To orient the pre-school child to the school environment so that he is excited about school.

b. To associate freely with other children in a new environment.

c. To arouse the child's curosity and interest in books to the extent he will check out at least one book per week.

The objectives for the teachers are:

a. To develop skills so that teachers will accurately assess the cognitive and affective development of young children.

b. To develop appropriate instructional techniques that the teacher will use for the language development of children.

c. To develop appropriate instructional techniques for the mathematical concept development of children.

d. To make available and adequately discuss new instructional programs so that the teacher can incorporate them into the learning program.

The objectives for parents are:

The Cognitive Domain

a. To develop ways in which parents can enhance the child's educational development through home activities.

b. To increase frequency of sibling language and interaction between child, parents, and peers.

c. To assist the child in engaging in more elaborate and expressive language.

d. To increase the amount of direct instruction between parent and child and/or older sibling and child.

The Affective Domain

a. To develop child behavior that is appropriate to the situation.
b. To develop positive attitudes toward school and school-related activities.
c. To make more viable the worth of books, magazines, records, etc.
d. To create a desire to spend time working and playing with their child.

The fourth step of this evaluation model is the formative stage. Scriven (1967) describes formative evaluation as that which is used to improve a curriculum during its developmental stages. Thus, formative evaluation is used to determine the degree of mastery of the learning tasks and to pinpoint the part of the task not mastered. Bloom, Hastings, and Madaus (1971) states that it is possible for the curriculum developer to construct a unit by beginning with objectives that are measurable, and also determine the level of criteria that is necessary to be met in the achievement of the objectives. Given this criteria, the instructional material should be selected and/or created to assist in designing the learning experiences which would enable the learners to master the specified objectives. After the unit has been completed, an instrument was then designed to determine the degree of mastery of the objectives for this instructional unit. The purpose was not to grade, but to determine at the end of each instructional unit for the four-year-old children by the classroom teacher and also by activities which were sent home with the child. The parents reinforced the learning activities that the child was involved in the classroom. Therefore, the parent also had opportunity to determine if the child had mastered the objectives of the unit and, if not, to assist in this mastery.

Criterion - reference measures were also used to assess the mastery of the objectives for the teachers and parents in the improvement of their instructional and interactional skills. The formative criterion reference results are important only in mastery or pass and fail form, since formative evaluation is designed as an

on-going process to provide the learner and the instructor with continual feed-back on the mastery of the instructional objectives. It is thus a stage that permits intelligent changes to be made in the teaching-learning environment.

The final component of this model is the summative evaluation stage. Scriven (1967) describes summative evaluation as the final evaluation of a large teaching unit. It is directed towards a much more general assessment of the total program.

In this model the major purpose of summative evaluation is to determine the degree of behavioral change in each of the group of learners. Summative evaluation, then, is the over-all evaluation in order that a general conclusion can be made as to the effectiveness of the total program.

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